

Posted on: 11/01/2003 www.ishn.com

Ergonomics update

SIDEBAR: Ergo factors into wellness equation

Dr. David Hunnicutt, president of the Wellness Councils of America, says there are four things businesses should consider in maintaining a healthier workforce: ergonomics, or preventing injuries related to repetitive motion; fatigue; physical activity; and weight of employees.

He said the United States is facing an epidemic of muscular and skeletal problems because of inactivity and high-calorie diets.

The answer, he said, can be walking 30 minutes a day and eating 100 less calories a day. "One thing you can do is give employees pedometers. I got a pedometer and I wear it religiously. That means 10,000 steps a day and if I don't get it, I have to keep moving."

Fatigue, especially, he said, is a topic that often gets him "laughed out of the room," until he shows striking statistics about it.

"Those who work long hours are seen as warriors. They are sought after," Hunnicutt said.

"What a lot of people don't know is when someone is sleep deprived, it's like being at a .15 blood alcohol level. It's like having nine beers and then showing up and saying, 'I love work!'"

In the end, be it the workplace or at home, paying attention to lifestyle is 50 percent of what helps keep people healthy, Hunnicutt said. Pay attention and act on information, and healthiness will be an attainable goal.

"You don't have to be a health Nazi to live a long life," he said. "You don't have to wake up and eat nothing but sprouts and run 25 miles like an antelope. You do have to pay attention to your lifestyle."